



# Art's everywhere at Artisphere

By Joquita Burka

Brian Olsen kept the crowd captivated by painting portraits while the crowd watched and listened, in this case, to Bob Marley.

South Carolina Smiles 2006



Got six minutes? Brian Olsen will paint for you a 4-foot, 6-inch picture of Bob Marley while the reggae legend's music surrounds the bouncing crowd. If you tend toward the slower pace, head down to the booths of artists such as Ray Jones, who shapes ancient and exotic woods into intricately designed boxes, filled with incredible detail. Ceramics? Textiles? Photography? Watercolor? Acrylics? Sculpture? Jewelry? Dance? Music? It's all here—in an approximately seven-block area that made downtown Greenville a most fascinating place to experience the arts.

Artisphere's subtitle, "The International Arts Festival of Greenville," is an accurate description of this three-day celebration of all that is art. And in its debut it, as they say in baseball, knocked one out of the park. By combining local talent with international talent, the festival gave everyone a feel for what was going on in the large, local art scene as well as a perspective on international talent. It had everything a successful festival needs....

**Location:** Greenville's downtown continues to be a most wonderful destination. Artisphere chose the area known locally as the West End with all its beauty. The Falls Park on the Reedy River is perfect for open-air venues with its rushing water, waterfalls and plentiful gardens, and the new Liberty Bridge with its surrounding steps offered great vantage point to music, dance and visual arts. Local restaurants brought out their international fare so that festival-goers could munch as they relaxed near the Jazz Stage.

**Art:** Performing artists from 14 countries and visual artists from 22 states filled the booths and stages. By presenting only juried artists, the quality of work was superb. Exquisite glass,

unique pottery, one-of-a-kind jewelry, handmade handbags, delicately tinted photography, finely-worked furniture, limited-edition prints and original oils lined the street. Sculpture too large to fit the booths spilled out into the streets, giving everyone a glance of the artists' creations. With prices from \$20-\$15,000, everyone could own a bit of art.

**Entertainment:** It began with the Celebration! Congo Choir from the Congo Basin in west-central Africa, which opened the program with a riot of color and music. "An Evening of Raga," performed on sarode (string), tabla (percussion) and tempura (wind), entertained audiences on the next evening. South Carolina's own Hallelujah Singers brought down the house on the final evening with their music in the Gullah tradition. Every day and night was filled with performances by local dance troupes, symphonies and children's theater. It was all there.

**People:** Young, old, teen-agers, families, collectors and browsers came in great numbers. A children's area drew kids with the challenge of creating their own arts and crafts. At the end of the festival, festival Executive Director Mary Ellington surveyed the artists and the crowd with the same result, "They'll be back! It was absolutely amazing. We were very pleased." And so was the crowd. "We'll be back." That was the overwhelming response of artists from across the country. They loved the quality of the art, the crowd, the atmosphere and the sales. And you will too. So mark your calendar for Artisphere—April 21-23, 2006.

Find out more...

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